

50 Things Every Caregiver Should Know



There is no doubt that caregiving can be a challenging job, but you can get the help you need. Below are 50 supportive tips – from emotional reassurance to suggestions for getting help. If you need additional assistance, call VA's Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274) or visit us online at www.caregiver.va.gov.

1. A Caregiver is someone who cares for an aging, ill, injured or disabled Veteran.
2. Caregiving duties range from occasional errand-running and other supportive care to 24-hour, live-in support.
3. You don't have to live with the Veteran to be a Caregiver.
4. About one fourth of adults are Caregivers.
5. There is no one way to care for a Veteran. Each situation is different.
6. You can provide care yourself or bring in other family members. You can also hire a professional Caregiver.
7. The Veteran being cared for may live at home or in your home. Or he or she may live in an assisted living or shared housing situation.
8. Each Veteran being cared for has different needs.
9. When possible, you and the Veteran being cared for should make decisions together.
10. The wishes of the Veteran being cared for are *very important*.
11. Your needs and wishes are important, too.
12. Taking care of yourself is as important as caring for your loved one.
13. Be sure to eat well, get enough rest and exercise regularly.
14. The healthier you are, the better care you will provide!
15. Don't be afraid to say you need a break – no one can do it all by themselves.
16. Help and support can come from community organizations, religious organizations, family members, friends or neighbors.
17. When people offer to help, say yes!
18. Keep a list of the things you can use help with, such as bringing dinner or giving you a break. When someone offers to help, have them choose from the list.
19. Find out about meal delivery, transportation services, adult day care and respite care.
20. If you are balancing work and caregiving, talk to your employer about flexibility in your job.
21. You may be able to take time off from work under the Family and Medical Leave Act. This federal law allows qualified employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid time off to care for a family member.
22. A VA social worker or nurse who assists people in finding care for an aging, ill, injured or disabled adult is called a care or case manager.
23. A VA care manager helps find services – whether you live close by or in another city or state.
24. Contact the Veteran's primary care provider or VA social worker, county social services, local area agency on aging or senior center to find out about respite care and other services in your area.
25. If the Veteran you are caring for has a low or moderate income, you may be able to get financial assistance for care through your county or state.
26. Caregiving duties often change over time. A Veteran may need occasional help now and more care later on.



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27. Planning ahead can make caregiving easier in the future.
 28. As a Caregiver, you will need to learn about medical, financial and legal issues.
 29. Talk with the Veteran you are caring for about money, medical care and legal issues. This may not be easy, but it is critical in planning for the future.
 30. Keep the Veteran's social security number, doctors' names and phone numbers, prescriptions and insurance information where you can find them in an emergency.
 31. Find out about a Durable Power of Attorney for health care and finances. These give you the legal right to make decisions if your loved one cannot.
 32. You may need to know about income, bank accounts, wills and insurance policies.
 33. Talk with a lawyer about legal issues and financing care. Legal aid is available to people who cannot afford to pay for a lawyer.
 34. Learn as much as you can about the Veteran's illness, disease or condition.
 35. Get information about the condition by talking to a health care provider, reading books or searching the Internet.
 36. Learning to care for a Veteran can take practice and special skills.
 37. Learning how to care for a Veteran can also help you feel more confident.
 38. You can learn how to provide care from health care professionals, videos or books.
 39. All Caregivers feel overwhelmed at times. If you often feel overwhelmed, you may need to get help.
 40. If you feel angry or often lose patience with the Veteran you are caring for, get help.
 41. If you use alcohol, drugs or medication in order to cope, get help.
 42. If you are depressed, talk to a doctor, counselor or therapist. Depression can be treated.
 43. It is critical for Caregivers to develop a support system.
 44. You can get support from a support group, therapist, family members or friends.
 45. Other Caregivers can be a great resource. Talk to you Caregiver Support Coordinator to see about starting or joining a Caregiver support network near your VA Medical Center.
 46. Caregiver support groups can help you connect with others who are going through similar experiences.
 47. A sense of humor can help you deal with the emotional ups and downs.
 48. Caregivers who get help are less likely to burn out.
 49. Caregivers who get help are better able to provide care for the long term.
 50. Caregiving is not an easy job – but it can be very rewarding.

